

From Martial Art to Performance:
Kalarippayattu and Performance in Kerala:2

Phillip B. Zarrilli

Folk Dances: Kōlkali, Paricamuttumkali, Vēlakali, and Oachirakali: Kōlkali (stick play) is a vigorous folk dance in which the participants wield two sticks as they circle dancing and singing through seven to 12 separate sequences of complex choreography. There are both Muslim and Hindu groups which perform Kōlkali in northern and central Kerala. The Muslims of Kerala who perform Kōlkali near Trichur are agricultural labourers. A. A. Ibrahim, the leader of a Kōlkali troupe from Mochad near Wadakkancherry, noted the differences in training between their central Kerala group and those groups who perform in north Kerala.

All the living Āsans of all Kōlkali troupes in the north are trained in Kalari. I know many Muslim Gurukkals who still run Kalaris. One lives nearby. . . In the north there is much more leaping and jumping than we do, especially in the last three sequences [of 12]. In the north they must undergo some Kalari training. Here we don't do leaps and jumps as much because we have had no Kalari training. But this training is not compulsory for the performers. They can best perform if they have undergone the training.³¹

In the Muslim form the songs sung during the dance sequences are called *Bhadarmuni Pāttuka!* ('Sword Fight Songs'). These songs were most likely composed during the 19th century by the Muslim Moryeen Kutty Vydiar, a physician who knew indigenous medicine. A Muslim priest as well, he composed these songs with a liberal mixing of Arabic, Urdu, Tamil, and Malayalam. He is reported to have belonged to Vengara Village in Mallapuram district in the north of Kerala and apparently was associated with Kalarippayattu training there. The teachers in north Kerala are said to be descendants or associates of Maryeen Kutty. The songs he composed tell of the heroic feats of Prophet Mohammad in his conquering victories.

These songs are sung in a lusty folk style, with the troupe leader giving one line which is repeated by the group of six to 12 males performing the line and circle dances. The vigour of the singing is matched by the energy of the dancing in which not only intricate

steps are performed, but sticks are wielded and struck together as the dancers weave in and around each other.

Muslim Kōlkali is generally performed at mosques for festivals or weddings, or at homes upon invitation for celebrations or special events. At least in the central Kerala form, the first four sequences are given the following specific names:

1. Minnukkali (to clean or wash the sticks, i.e., by rubbing them together).
2. Olichali-vattam (to remove oneself or to escape from attack by jumping out of the way).
3. Marinjukalimari vaykali munukali, thaduthu (a variety of play in attacking the enemy by moving from attack).
4. Marimarinju kali mari thichikol vattom (another variety of attack).

These descriptive names of individual sequences illustrate the possible martial origin of at least some portion of these Kōlkali sequences.

The Northern Ballads occasionally record the fact that Muslims were trained in Kalarippayattu and that some went on to become well known Kalari Gurukkals. The martial and heroic ideal, as noted in Zaynu'd-Dīn's admonition for holy war, was certainly a living part of the Muslim tradition in Kerala. Kōlkali's 'Sword Fight Songs' illustrate the continuity of this heroic Muslim ideal. The use of sticks in Kōlkali may have been drawn from Kalarippayattu training in the short stick or *ceṟuvati* (Fig. 9). At one time this dance may have developed within the confines of a Muslim Kalari since it appears that at least in northern Kerala Kōlkali dancers ideally received Kalarippayattu training.

Paricamuttumkali (Shield-hitting play) is another form of folk dance which uses a stick (sword) and shield and which draws upon Kalarippayattu for its traditional training. There are both Muslim and Hindu troupes which perform this dance. In north Malabar the training for Muslim groups was traditionally under the guidance of a Gurukkal where training was received in a Kalari specially constructed for this dance training³². Hindu performers may include groups from various castes, including *vaṇṇāns* or even Nairs. Perumannan Sanku, the leader of one Hindu troupe, tells about his training:

You have to undergo *ulicil* [massage]. In order to bend the body sometimes the teacher will try to fit you inside a ring of rope and you

must touch your hands to the feet. I had massage during training from my own father. He was also a performer. He began our troupe and was the first group to perform in this area. My father's teacher was a Tiyya from near Shoranur. He learned massage as a part of his own training. He only gave massage as a part of the training. The massage is done with both the hands and the feet. There are a few exercises done beforehand, but they usually are done in a sitting position. . . There was no separate training for use of sword and shield. Their use was learned as a part of the dance. My training lasted for one year, beginning at the age of ten.³³

As with *Kōlkali*, *Paricamuttumkali* is a vigorous circle dance in which the performers sing while dancing. The singing here is to the accompaniment of brass cymbals while the dancers weave in and around each other. The stick and shield are wielded around and over the head, and they are specifically 'flourished' as in *Kālarippayattu* practice with a twisting action of the right wrist and left elbow. The sticks and shields are flourished throughout the dance as the performers strike stick against stick or stick against shield rhythmically, following the cadence of the cymbals and singing. The vigour of the dance comes from the raw energy of the performers as they steadily increase the tempo in each segment of the dance while the complexity of the steps increases as well. The steps include deep body bends with extension of the back leg, similar to the 'horse' pose of *Kālarippayattu*. The deep bends and body extension required in performance, as well as the leaps and turns of the most accomplished performers, display the type of body suppleness acquired in at least minimal *Kālarippayattu* training.

The stories narrated in the singing of the Hindu form of *Paricamuttumkali* are largely drawn from the *Rāmāyana*, *Bharatan*, and *Bhagavatam*. Very few are written specifically for this dance form. The existing traditional stories are drawn from directly and then adapted. Occasionally Hindu performers include some Muslim songs in their performances. *Paricamuttumkali* is usually performed at marriage ceremonies or for other special family occasions.

Paricamuttumkali troupes today are often lacking in the traditional skills which former performers possessed. A lack of time for training and of fuller use of *Kālarippayattu* exercises means that many performers are no longer capable of dancing the most difficult and acrobatic sections of advanced performance.

Performed in Alleppey district in southern Kerala, *Vēlakali* is traditionally danced by Nairs. In *Vēlakali* the influence of *Kālarippayattu* is readily apparent in both training and performance. As in *Paricamuttumkali* the dancers perform with shields and sticks representing swords. Specific sword and shield techniques, especially



Fig. 9: Kolkali—the dancers begin to weave in and around one another, circling in opposite directions and striking the sticks of other dancers as they pass.

Fig. 10 Vēlakali—the line dance in which the stick and shield are circled flourished around the head.

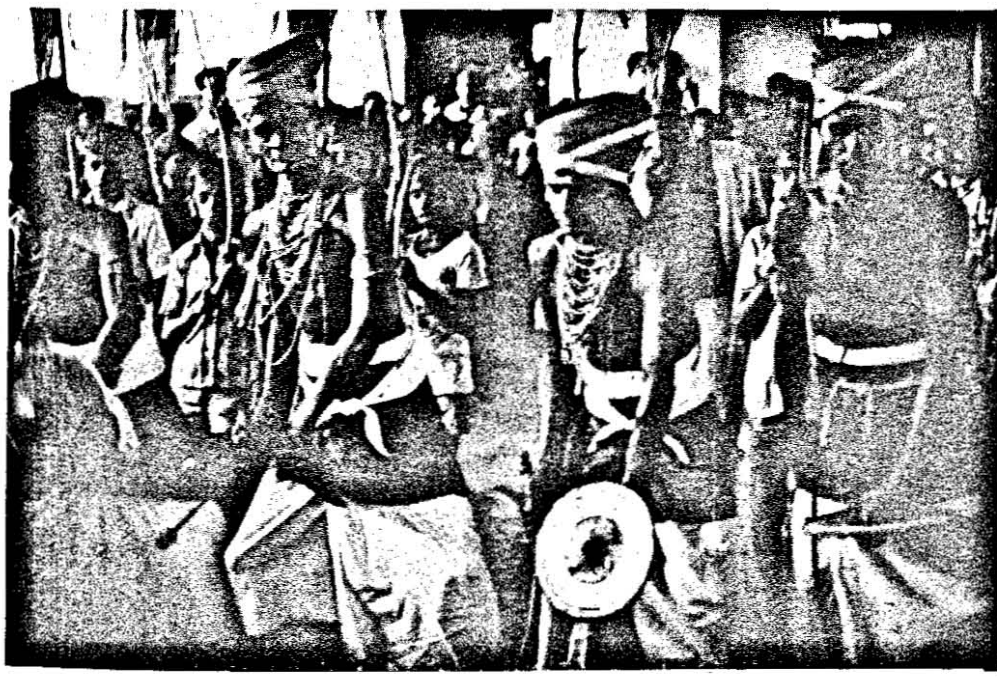




Fig. 11: Oachirakali—the group line dance/display similar to Kalarippayattu's horse pose.

Fig. 12: Oachirakali—line dance/displays prior to the actual 'battle'.



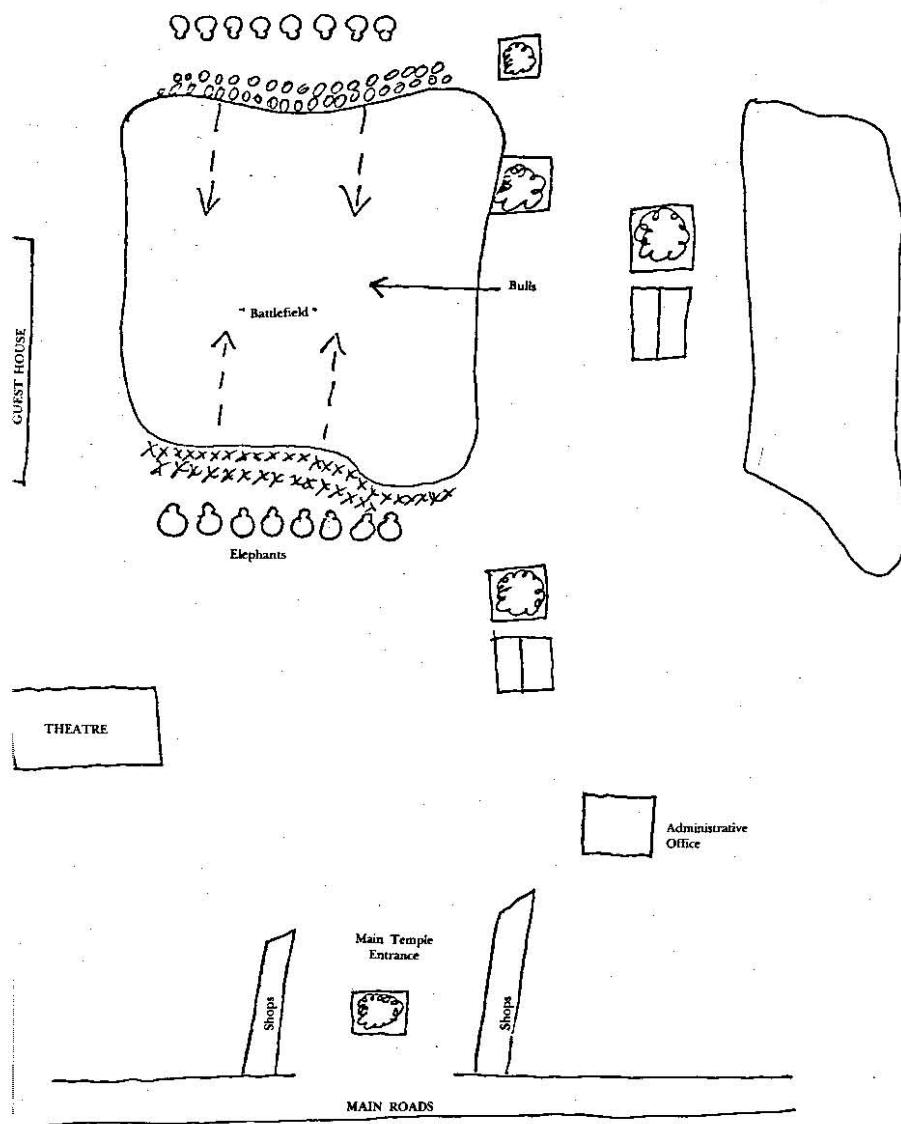


Fig. 13: Oachirakali—temple and 'battlefield'.

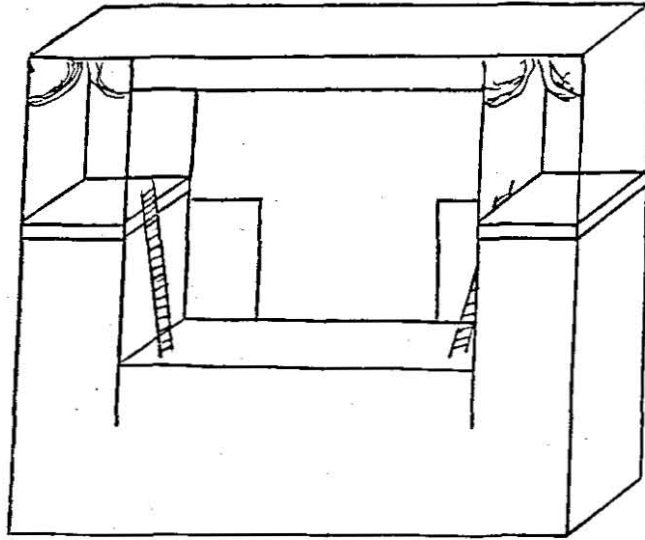


Fig. 14: The Cavittu Natakam stage, constructed temporarily for each set of performances. All characters enter upstage right by the door and exit upstage left, creating patterns of movement from the audience's left to right. The two raised platforms are the 'palaces' of the opposing kings in the plays, and are based upon the Spanish carros or wagon platforms. (Adapted from Sabeena Raphy, *Cavittu Natakam*, Kottayam: India Press, 1964). Due to the high cost of erecting this traditional wooden stage, simple platforms without porticos, or proscenium stages, are often in use today.

Fig. 15: Cavittu Natakam—a First Minister leads his soldiers to battle in the dramatization of the story of Charlemagne.



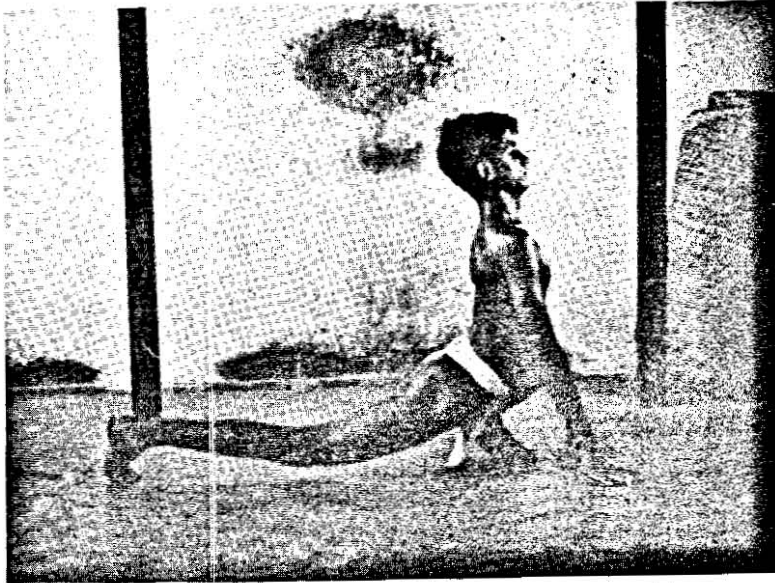
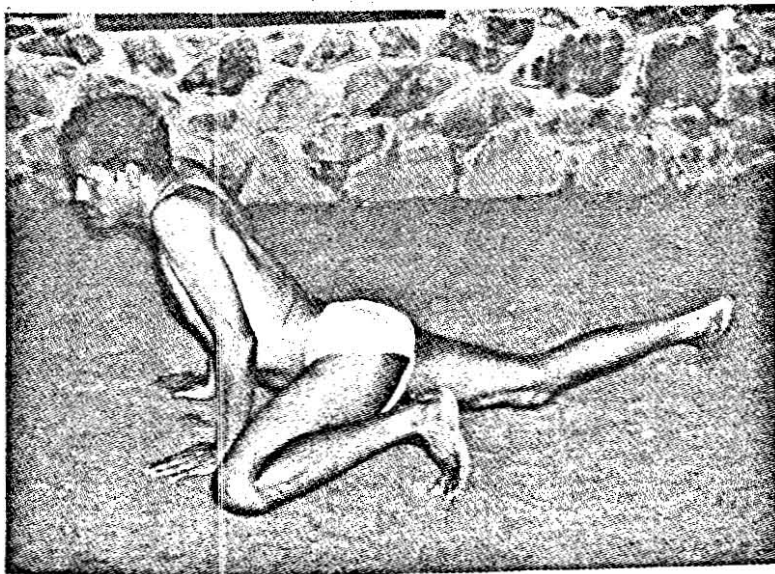


Fig. 16: Parakkaum Veccatavu—stretching and arching the back in Kathakali, an adaptation of the Cat Pose of Kalarippayattu.

Fig. 17: The Kalarippayattu Cat Pose.



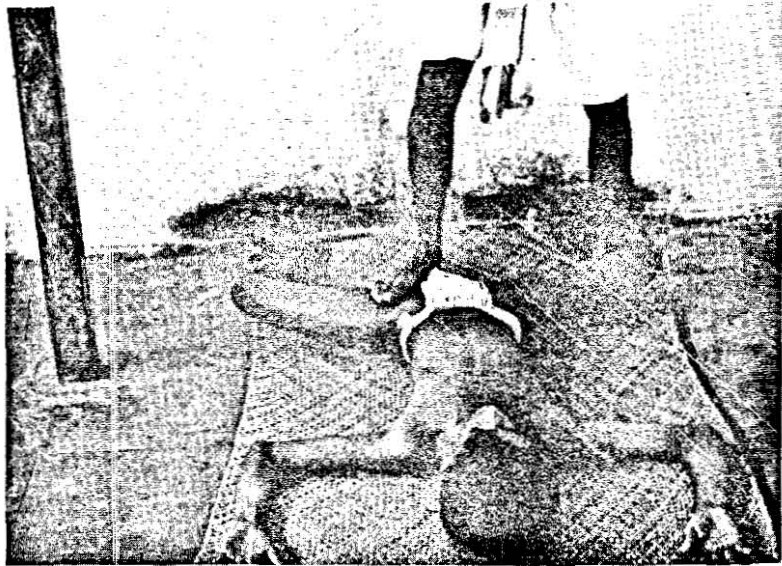


Fig. 18: Kathakali Ujjicil—feet against the wall, the teacher is able to apply maximum pressure with his feet to the student's thighs in developing the turnout of the legs, an integral part of the Kathakali aesthetic.

Fig. 19: Kathakali battle choreography—locking and circling, Bhima and Baka lock arms at centre stage.





Fig. 20: Kalarippayattu Otta, 12th Atav—as recorded in verbal commands and seen in practice, the end of this sequence begins with a “cut to the head” executed from the western position and defended on the east (left).

Fig. 21: Otta—immediately following this cut, the opponents lock left arms and begin to turn to the left. While circling the Ottas are at the ready for thrusting at the opponent.



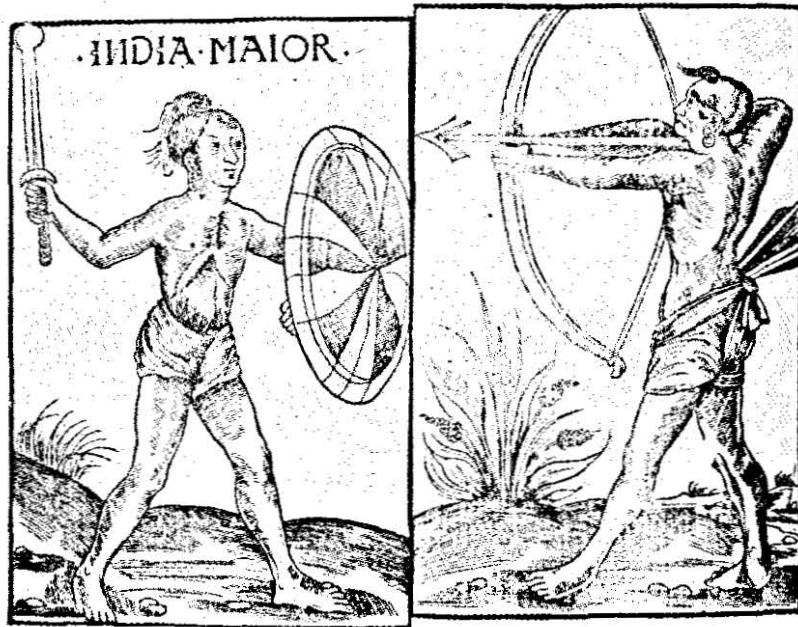
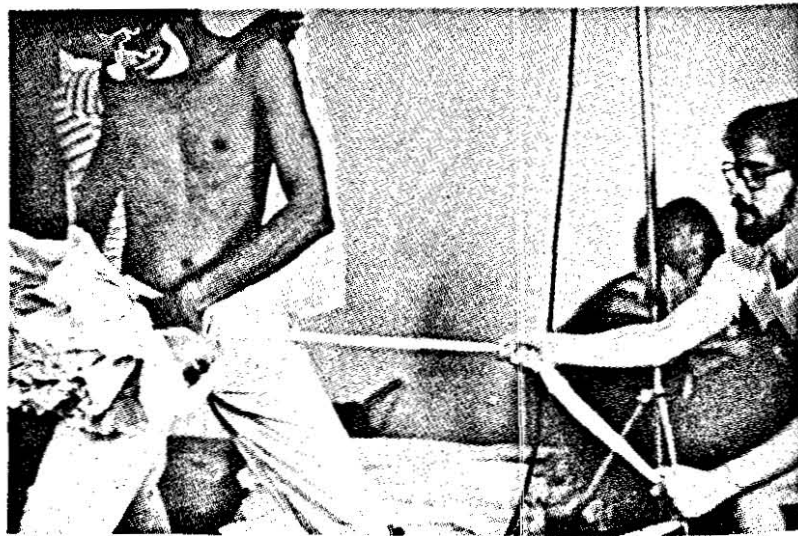


Fig. 22: Nair soldiers in Kacha—a woodcut appearing first in Balthasar Springer's *Meerfahrt*, published in 1509. (Reproduced from Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Vol. I. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.)

Fig. 23: Kathakali actor begins the process of wrapping starched underskirts in his long Kacha.



flourishes, are found again. The last part of the dance includes leaps, turn, and jumps—all drawn from Kalarippayattu training.

Generally performed at temple festivals from March through May, Vēlakali became the most famous part of the ten-day Utsavam celebrations during Meenam (March—April) at Sri Padmanabhaswami temple in Trivandrum. In the past each day of the celebrations included not only Kathakali dance-drama performances within the precincts of the temple, but also Vēlakali performances. For this festival, Vēlakali was not simply a martial dance and display, but a full-scale symbolic reenactment of the battle of Kurukshetra between the Pandavas and Kauravas.³⁴ M.D. Raghavan has given a detailed description of this majestic reenactment as traditionally performed until a few years ago:

It is customarily played under the superintendence of Mathur Panikker, the hereditary *āsan*, and minister of Chembakasseri Rajah's family . . . Vēlakalikkars assemble from various *taluks*, and Mathur Panikker commands the battalion and leads the attack on the Pandavas, who are represented by gigantic wooden images erected for the occasion in front of Sri Padmanabhaswami Temple.

They play commences with a flourish of trumpets and kettle-drums, corresponding to a call to arms. In a few minutes each house sends forth its men, well armed and equipped to the field. . . Equipped with a shield held in the left hand, and a blunt sword in the right, the fight begins. At the call of the trumpet, the players gather round the flag. . . No sooner do they assemble and form themselves into line, than the march is sounded. The younger ones form the front, the elders bring up the rear, with the flag bearers forming the rearmost line. This mock army is accompanied by dummies of animals, birds used in olden times for military purposes, such as swans, oxen, etc. These, borne on shoulders, come last. In this array the army marches from its place of encampment (now a banyan tree) to the battle field (now in front courtyard of the temple). There it takes its stand. The advancing force performs the tactics of a combined attack marching in full column against the enemy. The symbolic fight lasts for an hour, during which time the players prance like spirited steeds and jump and dance about and around the Pandava dummies. The Pandavas being the victors, the Kouravas at the end of the offensive, retreat in a stampede up the temple steps. The players also give exhibitions of single combats. Two of the young warriors step to the front, and to the tune of music perform feats with the sword and shield and show their skill in fencing. They then retire and fall into line. Another pair take the field and go through similar exercises.³⁵

Vēlakali at the smaller temple festivals in Alleppey district does not have the same broad grandeur of the huge reenactment in Trivandrum. There, in the villages, Vēlakali is more a martial folk dance, including some movements displayed in the Trivandrum spectacle, but without the symbolism of the battle of Kurukshetra.

Vēlakali, both in the Alleppey village and in Trivandrum, is directly derivative of Kalarippayattu. The Nair performers and their Panikker leaders were traditionally trained in martial arts. The leaps.

jumps, turns, and sword-play were all a part of that training and have been readily employed in this folk dance.

One of the few remaining gurus of the form is Vellur Narayana Kurup of Alleppey, 80 years of age in 1980. He began his own training at 18 under his first teacher, Kalarikkal Narayanan Kunju, and later studied for seven years under Krishnan Kunju in the Vellur kalari. Vēlakali was traditionally taught by two families, the Vellur and Mathur (the Mathur referred to above). Each family, established by tradition with teaching Kalarippayattu had received a land grant from the Raja of Travancore. In Vellur Narayana Kurup's lifetime the Vellur Kalari has only been used for Vēlakali training. However, Narayana Kurup relates that the Vellur Kurup family was charged with the responsibility of heading the local raja's army. It is likely that at one time Kalarippayattu and Vēlakali were both taught by the Vellur Kurup family in this Kalari (and likewise by the Mathur family in their Kalari). The integral link between Vēlakali and Kalarippayattu is illustrated by training which Vellur Narayana Kurup received during his years as a student:

I began my own training with Daksina, and then putting on the Kacha. Oil was applied to the entire body. After applying the oil we prayed to the god Durga. Then we performed physical exercises called Meyyorukkam of which there were 12 to be done. Other exercises included Sūci [splits], massaging the thighs with the hands, circling of the back with Cattam [jumps] following, leg stretches, and others. After these preliminaries we began to learn steps.

This training lasted for four months each year, during which we had massage [Uḷicil] for three months during the rainy season. The massage came after the application of the Kacha in the early morning.

Vellur Narayana Kurup's troupe today consists of a group of men who are all 60 years or older. Their advanced age precludes the performance of some of the more vigorous and intricate variations of Vēlakali choreography. The choreography consists of a line of dancers/warriors, each of whom holds a wooden sword and shield (Fig. 10). Each line of performers is accompanied by young boys carrying banners as it moves forward and backward, surging in unison to the specific rhythmic pattern set by the musicians.

The segments of unison line dance are punctuated by individual virtuoso displays of dance and by the joining of two dancers who engage in a mock duel. Vellur Narayana Kurup explains that

the concept is that a leader from each group comes forward to engage in a duel, and then rejoins his ranks at the end of the duel. In the past this display included the two dancers hiding completely behind their shields. Today some of us don't have the same suppleness of body to perform all these things.

Many characteristic elements of Kalaripayattu sword and shield play are found in the choreography and use of sword and shield in Vēlakali. When students are learning a particularly difficult movement with the sword, the use of the stick for initial practice lessens the risk of injury. The use of the stick, rather than live blade, in dance forms such as Vēlakali and Paricamuttumkali is a natural development, as a form incorporated Kalaripayattu movements divorced from actual combat.

The Vēlakali dancer's preliminary training, a development of preliminary Kalaripayattu training, prepares him for subtle weight shifts as the body weight is passed from one leg to the other. The circling of the body, such a characteristic part of both preliminary Kalaripayattu training and Vēlakali performance, are closely related as is the Vēlakali dancer's constant circling of sword and shield around the head. One of but many specific jumps seen in Vēlakali and drawn from Kalaripayattu is the right-foot-jumping kick with the big toe extended. The common root of this jump, also found in Kathakali, must be in Kalaripayattu, the common source of both preliminary exercises and choreography which include this jump.

Another form of folk dance in the context of a mass mock combat is Oachirakali. Oachirakali troupes, however, vary in that some use the stick and shield while others use two sticks in their dancing and mock combats. Oachirakali, like Vēlakali's past performances in the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple celebration of the battle of Kurukshetra, is said to be performed as a remembrance of an historical battle. In this case the performance of Oachirakali reenacts the battle between the Kayamkulam Raja (the local raja of the medieval principality in which Oachira village is located) and Marthanda Varma, the ruler of Travancore. A related legend passed on by informants is that the physical area was used for the training of the soldiers of the Kayamkulam Raja and thus the performance of Oachirakali is a remembrance of this training. Lack of local records fails to substantiate the oral literature which surrounds the performance of Oachirakali, except for the fact that the battle between Marthanda Varma and the Kayamkulam Raja did indeed occur in this region some time during the 1730's or 1740's.

Oachirakali is something of an anomaly. It might best be described as a mass martial display/entertainment taking place in the context of an annual temple festival. The performance of Oachirakali takes place on the grounds of the Parabrahma temple in Oachira village, located approximately 3 kilometres from the old Kayamkulam Raja's palace. There is no apparent relationship between the nature of the

performance, which is decidedly martial, the legends associated with the historical meaning of the performance, and the fact that it is performed during a major temple festival.

However, the festival is highly popular, and is attended by thousands either as participants in the various Oachirakali troupes who come to engage in the mock combat, or as spectators/participants in the Pūjas offered specially during the festival. There is no formal temple shrine, but rather a series of sacred banyan trees—a sacred grove. There is no official temple Pūjari, but rather a governing committee who welcome pilgrims of all castes to the temple. Pilgrims come to the temple to cure childlessness and a variety of diseases. The mud/sand of the area is rubbed onto the skin and is believed to have special curative powers.

The five-day temple festival at which Oachirakali is performed begins on the first five days of Meethanam (about the middle of June) each year. The first day is largely ceremonial, consisting of an early morning flag hoisting, the registration of the numerous troupes of Oachirakali performers, and the performance by a few of the troupes of their dances at midday.

The second day is the major celebration day, while the third through the fifth days are a large cattle show and market. During the second day there is the major procession to the Oachira temple, a procession within the temple grounds, the dances/displays of the various troupes, and finally, the full-scale engagement of the numerous troupes divided into two 'armies' which 'fight' the mock battle.

The troupes, numbering approximately 16—20, gather early in the morning at four outlying smaller temples, to the north, south, east and west of the Parabrahma temple. Of these temples three are Bhagavati temples, and one (near the Kayamkulam Raja's palace and, indeed, the royal family's temple) a Kṛṣṇa temple. Four to five troupes gather at each temple, along with three to four elephants and accompanying musicians. At each temple preliminary ceremonies are performed, along with each troupe performing the Oachirakali dances/displays.

Each individual troupe consists of one or two leaders and seven to 16 performers. Members of the troupes range in age from about nine to ten at the youngest, to the mid-20's at the oldest, except for a few troupe leaders who are much older. Most of the troupes are a rather informal gathering of interested boys/young men who get together several weeks before the annual festival to 'rehearse' the movements of the dance/mock combat.

The troupe performances—both at the small outlying temples

and later at the Parabrahma temple—consist of a series of line/group dances (Fig 11) interspersed with duel/mock combat displays between two individuals of a troupe. These dance/displays are performed to the leader's *vāyttāri* (verbal commands) given in the form of nonsense syllables. During the group segments of the performance, the members of the troupe shout together the syllables to which they perform the set movements. Oachirakali's group dance/displays might be best characterized as semi-athletic/physical displays choreographed into combined movements which constitute a rough, vigorous dance. The group dances include steps, jumps, body bends, hops, all characteristic movements which appear to be generally drawn from exercises derivative of Kalarippayattu's preliminary exercise system (Fig. 11, like Kalarippayattu's horse).

The quality of performances by individual troupes varies greatly. Some troupes perform the set choreography with great precision. Others, especially those made up of the youngest boys, are energetic but imprecise in performance. The group displays include both line movements, and the group forming a circle and moving around.

The 'duels' or mock combats begin as two individuals, usually the older performers and often including one of the leaders of the group, step out of the line to pair off for an 'engagement'. The two combatants move back and forth or circle around the performance area to the cadences of verbal commands they shout in unison. These engagements are 'duels' between the two opponents in a set of formalized exchanges with their two sticks or stick and shield.

The Kalarippayattu basis of these 'duels' has several possible sources. One possible source is Kālari sword and shield training. In C.V.N. and similar Kālari practices, sword and shield blows are exchanged through mutual jumps as two opponents circle each other (Fig. 7). The same style of jumps and exchanges are found in Oachirakali exchanges. As mentioned earlier, the use of two sticks or stick and shield is common in preliminary Kālari sword and shield training.

A second possible course of the two-stick Oachirakali combat is from styles of martial practice in which two sticks are wielded as a completely separate item of practice. Central and southern Kerala have several styles of martial practice in which opponents wield two sticks simultaneously, exchanging offensive and defensive blows in quick, rapid exchanges through set sequences.

Once the preliminaries are complete, the troupes begin their procession to the Parabrahma temple and 'battlefield' behind caparisoned elephants. The colourful processions from each of the four temples are joined by spectators, all eventually merging on the

main road leading into the large temple grounds. Outside the main entrance approximately 12—14 elephants are gathered, along with 400—500 performers and literally thousands of spectators.

Once everyone has gathered, the temple bulls lead the procession as it slowly makes its way around the temple grounds. After a full circle of the compound, which takes the procession around the 'battlefield', one-half of the troupes and elephants gather on the western side and one-half on the eastern side of the field for combat. The swirl of colour and mass of spectators is a field of white dotted with knots of colour which are the various Oachirakali troupes. Amid the din of the musicians and the shouts of leaders, individual troupes clear small performance areas in which they again perform their displays as groups (Fig. 12) and in duels.

The temple committee leaders and the temple bulls gather at 'midfield'. Once the company have been fully arranged in line along each side of the battlefield (Fig. 13) the officials and bulls begin their trek across the battle zone. This field is a sunken pit. Since it is the beginning of the south-west monsoon, the pit is filled with approximately two feet of water, and is virtually a mud/water pit. When the officials reach the centre of the field, the 'attacks' begin. The Oachirakali troupes pour into the muddy pit from the eastern and western ends of the field, reach the centre of the field and engage in combat. The splashing 'warriors' zig-zag across the field, engaging from time to time in 'combats'. The mass display lasts for approximately 30—45 minutes when the recrossing of the battle zone by the temple bulls and officials signals the completion of the replaying of the historical battle.

Cavittu Natakam: Christian Folk Dance-drama: Cavittu Natakam is an indigenously developed form of Christian folk dance-drama which developed during the early 17th century after the temporary consolidation of the Christian communities of Kerala brought about by the Synod of Diamper in 1599. Cavittu Natakam provided the Kerala Christian community with its own elaborate form of performance which recounted the historic and heroic deeds of Western Christendom's heroes from Charlemagne to St George. Cavittu Natakam developed under the tutelage of some of the early Christian missionaries who accompanied the Portuguese to Kerala.

Cavittu Natakam is a curious blend of Western Christian medieval stories and staging techniques with indigenous music, rhythm, martial combat, and dance. The traditional Cavittu Natakam stage may have had its source in the Spanish two-storied *carros* or wagons arranged alongside or behind the platform stage. No other dramatic

form of Kerala uses such a wooden platform stage, temporarily constructed for performances. In Cavittu Nāṭakam the two-storied porticos were constructed as part of the entire platformed stage structure (Fig. 14) rather than as separate wagons. Here the two porticos are used exclusively for representing the places of the kings, characters found in nearly all Cavittu Nāṭakam plays.

Cavittu Nāṭakam is a strongly masculine form of performance allowing the Christian community to celebrate its own heroic tradition. The most important scenes in performances are those which emphasize the heroic. Durbar scenes take place in the courts or palaces of kings. They introduce the heroic ideal types: the kings and their first ministers. The stage is filled with soldiers as the king enters, carrying the symbols of his power: sceptre and crown. The emperors sing of their own greatness while their soldiers dance with high stepped masculine choreography. This is followed by the first minister's entrance, which traditionally culminated when he thrust his sword upright into the wooden planks of the stage. In the battle scenes which follow Durbar scenes, the soldiers are led by the first minister (Fig. 15)—the kings never taking part in battle. Traditionally such battle scenes had from 20 to 30 soldiers on stage at one time. In such scenes challenges are delivered and soldiers pair off for sword and shield duels, or engage in mass combat. Unlike any of the other Kalarippayattu-influenced performing arts of Kerala, Cavittu Nāṭakam attempts to achieve a high degree of realistic combat. Such attempts at verisimilitude are virtually unknown in other forms of battle choreography, such as in Kathakali. The actors in Cavittu Nāṭakam are armed with battle-ready swords and shields. The battles onstage become duels between Kalarī trained soldiers.

In the past the training of the actor included "thorough physical training in Kalaris including oil massage to make their body supple and strong. They are next taught to wield the various weapons as sword, spear, dagger and *vaṭi* (long stick). There were expert swordsmen among *āsans* competent enough to train the actors. Their line is fast disappearing."³⁶ In its formative years Cavittu Nāṭakam training and performance must have evolved directly from Kalarippayattu-trained Christians' involvement in developing this dance-drama form. At a later period when wealthy Christian households were patrons of Cavittu Nāṭakam troupes, special Kalaris existed for training Christian Gurukkals. Such teachers had to be masters of Kalarippayattu techniques so that the staged, realistic battle scenes, always the most exciting segment of the total performance, could capture the excitement of the battlefield and portray the heroic sentiment which is at the core of the form. Much

of the traditional emphasis upon physical culture and on expert swordsmanship has been lost today. Most actors today do not receive either extensive physical-culture training nor do they receive extensive weapon training.

Ouso Francis, a 63-year-old actor who has long played heroic roles in Cavittu Nātakam, emphasizes that in his own training he received separate instruction in his early years from a Kalarippayattu Asan. His own Cavittu Nātakam teachers did not all know Kalarippayattu techniques. Only a few of the actors received the Kalarippayattu training, and these were the individuals who were asked to play the heroic, martial roles calling for the most combat in performance. In his youth he did learn the physical-culture-system exercises which were a part of Cavittu Nātakam training. He points out that often "these traditions are not followed today". He had his Kalarippayattu training in the mornings, and his Cavittu Nātakam training in the evenings.

Kattipratambil Poulse Asan, a 59-year-old teacher of the Gothuruthu village Cavittu Nātakam troupe, reveals that in his own training he learned no separate physical-culture exercises, but only steps, footwork, and gestures required for performance. Trained under several teachers, this teacher has had little contact with either the physical-culture-system or the stage combat system derivative of Kalarippayattu.

Interviews with various artists reveal a wide range of familiarity from little to intimate knowledge of physical culture and combat systems. This wide-ranging variation in experience, along with the degeneration of former stage mastery of Kalarippayattu techniques, leads to productions—of both major repertory plays like the story of Charlemagne and new plays—in which the stage combat and choreography are alike below par. Such lack of skill, naturally, does not detract from the overall enjoyment of performances by local audiences.

A final example of the importance of the Kalarippayattu tradition in Cavittu Nātakam is revealed today by the introduction of a new play, *Koṭṭara Rahasayam* (The Secret of the Palace), written in 1970 and performed today by the Sen. Jacob troupe of Cochin. The play, with 128 scenes performed on two or three consecutive nights, centres around the Kalarippayattu training of the son of one of the kings in the play. From false identities, to masks, to battle, the play's rhythms pass from court to Kalar training to duels. Although this new script illustrates the importance of Kalarippayattu as a continuing part of the Christian heritage in Kerala, it illustrates a use of that tradition which is closer to the modern romanticized versions of Kalarippayattu popular in such Malayalam movies today as *Unniar-*

ca, a typical glorification of late medieval heroes and heroines which distorts the practical function and austere beauty of the Kalaripayattu system.

Yātrakali: Brahmin Entertainment: *Yātrakali* is a form of semi-religious entertainment which was a part of the life of Kerala Brahmans until 60 to 70 years ago. This form of entertainment is also known by numerous other names including *Śāṅghakkali*, *Śāstrakkali*, *Cattirakkali*, *Śāstrāṅgam*, *Kṣatrāṅgam*, *Panankali*, and *Pāṇayum Kaliyūm*. The martial nature of at least some segments of the entertainment is reflected in some of the names given to the form such as *Śāstrakkali* (*śāstra*, weapon), *Kṣatrāṅgam*, and *Cattirakkali*. M.G.S. Narayanan, following Elamkulam Pillai's work in Kerala history, has convincingly shown that by the ninth century A.D. certain educational centres in Kerala included as members *Cattar kor Cāthirar*, "Brahmins privileged to bear arms"³⁷. Such *Cattar* receive mention in the early medieval Manipravalam literature between the 13th and 15th centuries where they are most often depicted as boastful warriors.

The performers of this entertainment were a sub-group of Brahmans slightly degraded in rank from the highest class of Brahmans and with lesser privileges. Their degraded rank, on a level with *Aṣṭa Vyḍians* or *Āyurvedic* physicians, was due to their having taken up arms, and their lack of full Vedic knowledge. They are known as *Sāstrāṅgakār* or *Yātra-Namboodiris*, and earlier as *Cattar*.³⁸ The performers belong to the 18 *Sanghams* or association of Kerala, each having jurisdiction over a specific area. "Every non-vedic *Namboodiri* and *Kṣātrya* household is attached to one or other of these *Sanghams*"³⁹.

Full performances of this entertainment consisted of 15 or 16 different segments, lasting as long as two or three full days. In terms of martial content, the two most important parts of the entertainment included the post-banquet procession, usually the sixth segment, and the specifically martial segment in which weapons are used, variously listed as the 11th or 16th segment. While in the procession only the trappings of the martial nature of *Yātrakali* are revealed, it is in the *Āyudhametuppu* ('taking or carrying the weapon') that the full martial character of the entertainment is found. Rama Varma Appan Thampuram comments that this segment of *Yātrakali* was in earlier times "the most important among all the rites in *Śāṅghakkali*"⁴⁰. In his book, Appan Thampuram, drawing upon *Grandam* discovered in family homes which used to perform *Yātrakali*, goes on to detail the specific techniques which

were a part of Āyudhametupp. In the past this segment of the performance included displays of the following: (1) Meyyorkkatav (body exercises); (2) Āyudhaprayōgam (uses of weapons) including Vati (stick), Valum-paricayum (sword and shield), Kuntam (spear), Pondi (small club or mace), Curika (traditional two-edged sword of Kerala), and Verunkai (hand-to-hand combat). Appan Thampuram states that "in each item there were 18 Atav had different items. There were 62 Paricappayatt [Shield practice] Aṭav . . . 85 Vīcil [slashes or cuts] Aṭav such as Eḷakkunitti [taking and thrusting], Aśvam [horse], Aṭappuvāl ['close with sword', i.e., perhaps with sword drawn to the chest]", etc. He lists examples of some of the variations in body exercises including Ācil (forward steps), Caccukali (backward steps), Tiripp (circling), Gaṇapatikkaḷ (attaining the 'elephant position'), etc. As a specific example of one of the body control techniques, Appan Thampuram says that the performer would begin with Gaṇapatikkaḷ and (from this position) would then,

Bringing the palms together for the protection of the gods, bend and get up with the palms together, turn and salute, move backwards and salute with the palms, kicking with the right and the left [legs], put the right step to the left, and the left step to the right, jump and turn, putting down the step.⁴¹

Another example given is one part of the Valvetṭaṭav (sword-cutting applications):

Both opponents salute and taking position move east and west, the man on the west sitting back guides the movements and moves to the east; standing with the left foot forward defend four cuts there from the right to the left ...⁴²

Each example that Appan Thampuram has drawn from the Grandam indicates the direct relationship between Yātrakali and Kalarippayattu. The specific examples given of sequences of body control exercises and sword-play are sequences of technical short-hand terms derivative of Kalarippayattu Vayttari or verbal commands. Forward and backward steps, circling of the body, changing steps, and taking or attaining both the elephant and boar positions are part of Kalarippayattu body control exercises in preliminary training. The identical and nearly identical technical terms in weapon practice, such as Tolūt ('salute', Irutti ('sitting back', i.e., for momentum in the following thrust), Neṭṭan-kutti ('straight thrust'), etc. conclusively illustrate the close affinity between Kalarippayattu and Yātrakali. The body control example given above is nearly identical with the C.V.N. Kalari's worship of the deity with the body, Pūttara-tol.

An interview with Porakkutinjam Bhavadasan Bhattathiripad,

now past 88, who performed Yātrakālī in his younger years, revealed the fact that his training consisted to extensive massage applications and physical-culture training, along with learning the other segments of the Yātrakālī entertainment. This remarkable gentleman, one of the few remaining master performers of Yātrakālī, but whose memory is beginning to fail, still retains in his body the lithness which came from his training for performance. In a brief demonstration during the interview, Bhavadasan Bhattathiripad illustrated the beautifully choreographed kicks and turns of this form of Brahman entertainment which has now passed out of existence.

Kṛṣṇāṭṭam & Kathakālī: Devotional and Classical Dance-Dramas: Although there has been no common agreement in the past about the evolution of Kathakālī from Kṛṣṇāṭṭam through Rāmānāṭṭam to the fully developed Kathakālī, I believe that this line of development can finally be established and illustrated when the common base of actor training is examined. Kalarippayattu-trained Nayars became the first Kṛṣṇāṭṭam/Rāmānāṭṭam performers, receiving the patronage of the Zamorins of Calicut; and Rāmānāṭṭam/Kathakālī becoming the cultural prize of rulers of principalities throughout Kerala created the immediate need for the formation of troupes of actors who would have the stamina, flexibility, and control to perform these dance-drama forms with excellence. The competitive spirit among the rulers must have provided a spirited and creative surge of energy which was focused upon developing the best troupes possible. The morale and honour of these leaders and their warriors, traditionally won on the fields of battle, was slowly disintegrating with the continuing encroachment of foreign powers. That honour and morale, on the wane by the end of the 17th century, could be displaced from the field of battle and immortalized on the stage. The emergence of a wider range of performance techniques, a consolidation of costuming, and the burgeoning of creative inputs choreographically, brought Kathakālī into the limelight of Kerala culture by the early to mid-17th century.

It is in the training of the Kṛṣṇāṭṭam and Kathakālī actor, however, that the continuity of the Kṛṣṇāṭṭam/Rāmānāṭṭam/Kathakālī development is found. And it is here that we find the most perfected and consistent aesthetic utilization of Kalarippayattu techniques in a Kerala performing art. Both Kṛṣṇāṭṭam and Kathakālī training are modeled in general and in specific preliminary physical-culture techniques on the Kalarippayattu system. When the first Kṛṣṇāṭṭam troupe was formed by Kalarippayattu trained warriors, the physical discipline in training was already a part of their early education.

Their bodies had received the maximum benefit which allowed stamina, balance, control, and flexibility of the body for performance. The differences which exist between preliminary training in Kṛṣṇāṭṭam and various styles of Kathakali are differences of specific technique and not of overall pattern, i.e., all forms of training include extensive leg exercises and body stretching (as well as massage); however, one specific leg exercise or circling of the body may vary slightly from style to style or form to form. Such differences are a result of either initial geographic differences between one Kālarippayattu style or teacher and another, or of the introduction of new techniques during the evolution of a specific training system once a troupe had been formed under a particular ruler. Kathakali's physical discipline both in the northern and southern styles of training is, however, more highly evolved and complex than is that of Kṛṣṇāṭṭam. Perhaps this complexity is the result of the creative input of such leaders as Cattu Pannikar, or perhaps it is due to the devotional performance style of Kṛṣṇāṭṭam. With its physically demanding performance choreography, and lengthier time of performance, Kathakali demands tremendous stamina, body control, and flexibility.

The training of both Kṛṣṇāṭṭam and Kathakali actors takes place in a Kālari. Although Kālaris for actor training today vary widely in size and material of construction, we can assume that originally training took place in existing Kālaris where Kālarippayattu was also taught.

The system of actor training which exists today is a fusion of Kālarippayattu physical culture techniques, Rasābhinaya (facial expression) and Mudrās (language of hand gestures) drawn from Kuṭiyāṭṭam, and finally of specific choreography derivative of both Kālarippayattu, other Kerala performance forms, and new movements created specially for emerging form.

I would like to briefly examine a few of the specific parallels between Kālarippayattu physical-culture training and Kathakali/Kṛṣṇāṭṭam training; and between Kālarippayattu floor patterns and sequences and Kathakali battle choreography. Both of these areas of comparison will illustrate the extent of influence of Kālarippayattu on Kathakali dance-drama.

Kathakali training begins with an act of obeisance, a series of prostrations from three to seven in number (Namaskaram or Kumbital). These prostrations are performed toward the south-west corner of the Kālari (the Kanni-mūla of the Kālari). The south-west corner of the Kālarippayattu Kālari is where the presiding deity is lodged and where daily obeisance is made at the beginning of training. As we have seen, the Kālarippayattu student performs the

Pūttara-toḷ (worship of the deities with the body) or Kaḷari-vanakkam in this corner. It is obvious that the Kathakali Nāmaskāram is derived from one such form of worship.

The preliminary training of the actor begins each year with a repetition of physical exercises linked to massage (Uḷicil). Like the Kalarippayattu exercises, the Kathakali preliminary training is designed to render the body supple, flexible, balanced, and controlled. In Kṛṣṇāṭṭam these exercises are called Meyarapp and in Kathakali Meyarappaṭav (body control exercises). The specific exercises which constitute the series of body control exercises are drawn directly from Kalarippayattu although individual variations occur.

In the training given today at the Kerala Kalamandalam there are a total of 16 Meyarappaṭav. Most of these exercises are directly drawn from Kalarippayattu exercises. One set of such exercises are the Kalatav (leg exercises). A comparison of Kṛṣṇāṭṭam, southern Kathakali and northern Kathakali leg exercises will illustrate both the common derivation of the Kalatav and the individual variation in form and style. In the Kṛṣṇāṭṭam leg exercises, the hands are joined above the head as in the beginning practice of the first leg exercises in Kalarippayattu. In the northern style, the straight leg kick and turning kicks have been slightly altered so that there is no full extension of the leg to the shoulder. Here the kicks are joined together in a series of kicking exercises designed to develop the legs. The southern style includes in the Kalatav the circling kick drawn directly from Kalarippayattu while the northern style does not include this specific exercise. The Parakkum-vaccatav (apparently a late name) is a stretching of the back to a full arch (Fig. 16). This exercise for the Kathakali actor is drawn directly from the 'cat pose' of Kalarippayattu (Fig. 17). The Kathakali exercise has been slightly modified. Another example is the Malakkam-mṛṇṇal ('circling, twisting') exercise performed from one end of the Kathakali Kaḷari to the other. This exercise has been transformed from Kalarippayattu's seventh body exercise sequence.

Other examples include Kathakali's Cāṭṭam (jumps), flips, full back bends, Sūci ('needles' or splits). As in Kalarippayattu training, Kathakali preliminary training includes full body massage. Kalarippayattu massage is given with both the hands and feet over the entire body while in Kathakali only the feet are used for massaging the body while the hands are used exclusively on the face/head area. Precisely the same general pattern of massage (Fig. 18) is followed with the exception that in Kathakali more attention is given to the turn-out of the legs and the arch of the back. In Kathakali Uḷicil the

student places the feet against the wall of the Kalarī so that the teacher can literally stand on his knees, forcing the turn out of the legs. The same is true of the small of the back. These adaptations of the Kalarippayattu massage developed for aesthetic reasons. As the aesthetic form evolved, the body shape of the student was transformed by these adaptations in the massage so that by the end of years of training (and massage) the body was permanently shaped to have the characteristic splayed knees and arched back characteristic of the form.

Just as important as Kalarippayattu's influence on training has been its influence on body position and choreography in Kathakali. What were in Kalarippayattu offensive and defensive movements for use against an enemy in Kathakali became transformed into body movements or positions capable of beautiful aesthetic articulation. Some of the most basic postures and characteristically beautiful positions of the Kathakali actor are derived from Kalarippayattu. Such modifications came from two key considerations. First, there were choreographic decisions motivated by an attempt to express artistically the content of the stories enacted. Secondly, there were modifications demanded by the use of costumes, make-up, headpieces, etc. Many of the Kalarippayattu moves and postures are less extreme in Kathakali.

One example of modification of a Kalarippayattu pose is the use of the elephant pose (Fig. 3) in Kathakali as its basic body position. In Kathakali the feet-parallel position with the arched back (accentuated by the massage) is more of a squat, while in Kathakali the position is more erect, knees slightly bent. In both martial and performance art the feet are maintained just beyond shoulder width.

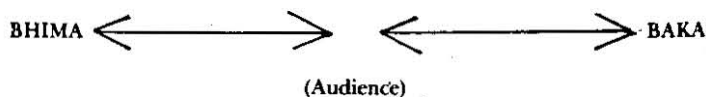
A second example of modification of position of the body is seen in the Curipp exercises of Kathakali. These exercises involve the body in continuous slow circling. The Curipp are the basis for the performer's presentation of many of the Mudrās and are also used as forms of transition from one choreographic pattern to another. In Kalarippayattu the circling of the body is much more vigorous. It is performed as one part of the acrobatic seventh body-exercise sequence. In Kathakali Curipp the body is also circled, but more slowly. The actor's head, unlike the martial-art student's, is kept more erect to support his headdress and to keep the face visible to the audience.

Yet a third characteristic choreographic movement is found in the Cāttam or jumps of Kathakali. The single-leg jumps provide some of the most exciting masculine choreographic movements of the heroes and demonic characters. Often practiced separately, as in the

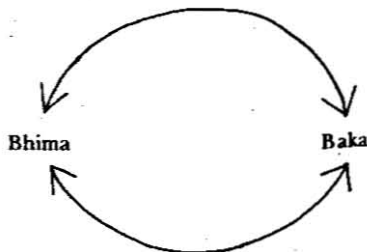
Ketticāttam of the northern style, these single-leg jumps are derived from Kalarippayattu's seventh and eighth leg exercises.

Unlike Cavittu Nāṭakam which literally and realistically recreates Kalarippayattu duel techniques, Kathakali developed its own unique battle choreography based upon its stylized mode of performance. The battle choreography is a generalized pattern which is applied to combat with any number of stage properties from bare hands to bow arrow, to Pondi (small club or mace). In general all battle scenes begin with a challenge delivered by opponents. The verbal challenge is followed by a visual challenge which each character performs through gestures and Ābhinaya. The challenges are followed by advances and retreats. Once these preliminaries are complete, the actual battle begins.

The battle scene between Bhima and Baka in *Baka Vadham* may serve as a typical example of Kathakali battle choreography. In this battle Bhima uses the Pondi while Baka uses his fists. Bhima is located stage right and Baka stage left for the initial delivery of challenges. Then Bhima and Baka begin their advances and retreats.



This is a simple back-and-forth movement executed with highly heroic steps. Bhima begins with three kick steps toward Baka, and then executes three backward steps on his toes while Baka (as Bhima move back) begins three right foot kicks forward and then steps back. These mutual advances and retreats continue. When complete, the battle begins with a circling floor pattern, beginning with the right foot for each character and moving to the right, then reversing and moving to the left. At the end of this circling, the opponents once again face each other.



More visual challenges are delivered with short hopping steps, vigorous stamps with both left and right feet, followed by rubbing the hands together in anticipation of the ensuing joining of the battle. This second set of challenges is followed by stepping toward one another and (with their backs to the audience) the locking of hands. This is then repeated on the opposite side. Following these exchanges in which Bhima and Baka both shove each other back and forth from the shoulder area, each opponent delivers stylized hits at the other first with the right fist. The left arms are locked while these blows are 'delivered' and the two characters continue shoving back and forth. As they once again hit one another with their right fists, they lock their arms and circle (Fig. 19).



locking arms



circling

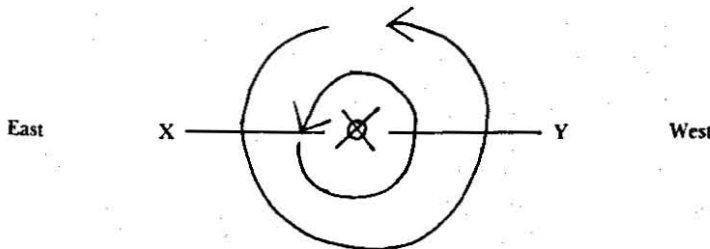
Now they circle to the left and hit with the left fist. These blows are then followed by the locking of the arms at the shoulders, and, while holding onto each other, the two characters turn and deliver kicks. The two characters then join hands, fists locked together, and proceed to jump half-way around the circle, and then return to their beginning positions. At this point they release their holds and retreat to opposite sides of the stage area. Bhima now picks up his club. They once again 'join' in battle. Bhima takes Baka's hands and draws them up behind him, delivering the 'death' blow with his Pondi. This ends the battle.

The floor patterns circumscribed during Kathakali battle scenes may have been drawn directly from similar patterns found in Kalaripayattu weapon practice. The Pondi used in Kathakali was at one time a part of at least one localized style of Kalaripayattu training. The use of the Pondi is recorded in a Grandam entitled *Kalari Vidya* (The Art of Kalari). This Grandam records the verbal commands for both the club and the double-edged sword. The Grandam was apparently derivative of a particular style of Kalaripayattu training known as Dronaveli, one of the localized schools or styles of the martial art. Although it is impossible to reconstruct

specific techniques recorded in this text, since it is no longer practised today, it is clear that the practice of the Pondi involved preliminary training for use of sword and shield. There are 18 Aṭav (sequences or forms) listed in use of the club (the same number of sequences used in the practice of Otta). It appears that the Pondi served a purpose in training similar to that of the Otta.

Although it is impossible to determine whether the floor patterns of Kathakali battles are drawn from Pondi use, it does appear that this same choreography may have come from Otta practice. In the 12th of 18 Aṭav in use of the Otta there is one specific segment in this advanced series of exchanges which is nearly identical to Kathakali choreography. This particular exchange comes at the very end of the 12 sequence. The verbal commands for this short exchange are as follows:

Defend thrust. Cut to the head. Lock left arms. Turn to the left and thrust with the right arm out to the ribs. Defend thrust again, turn and thrust. (Figures 20-21).



Prior to the circling pattern of exchanges there are a number of blows delivered between opponents in which there is the same pattern of advance and retreat as in the Kathakali choreography. Each of the advanced weapon sequences involves advances and retreats in the mutual 'salutes' during which the two opponents test each other's weaknesses.

The striking similarity of floor patterns, of specific movements, seen in the mutual delivery of thrusts, locking of arms, breaking contact, and thrusting again, appears to indicate that there is a very strong possibility that Kathakali battle choreography was drawn either from this 12th sequence of Otta combat or from a similar pattern in use of the Pondi.

The influence of Kalarippayattu on Kathakali is even seen in the costuming. In woodcuts from the medieval period (Fig. 22) and from

contemporary descriptions in the Northern Ballads, we discover that the tying of the Kacha (loin cloth) was an elaborate affair and involved the Nair in performing an elaborate body-exercise sequence. In one ballad telling of Tacholi Othenan, we read that he made final preparations for battle by girding on his Kacha through a convoluted twisting and turning of the body with one end of the Kacha attached to a tree.

Othenan tied his girdle
One end to a mango tree
The other to his loins.
In one pull the tree's leaves came down,
A second pull brought down the branches.⁴³

Although poetic license has been taken in the description, the same method of tying the Kacha is used daily in some present Kalaris in Kerala. The 25- to 30- foot-long red Kacha is held or tied to a post while the practitioner tightly binds the bladder and hip region.

In Kathakali the long Kacha serves two functions. The first function is the supportive and protective function of the Kalaripayattu, Kacha. Because of the importance of the Nābi-mūla or bladder region (as it is often called) where Prana (Life-breath) is believed to originate, binding the area tightly both protects the region and provides support for movement. Such support is particularly important in leaping and jumping. Kathakali shares with Kalaripayattu a low centre of gravity placed in the Nābi region. From this low centre, as noted earlier, the Kalar practitioner is able to garner energy for his vigorous moves, leaps, and jumps. This same low physical centre is also operative in the correct performance of Kathakali. Such a low centre allows the dance-drama performer to do fast-paced footwork while the upper body remains virtually motionless; to move gracefully through a wide variety of body-circling motions so necessary for correct delivery of Mudras; to execute jumps and leaps based on Kalar forms which give Kathakali its characteristic masculine tone.

Just as important as the physical dimension of the low centre in the Nābi is its function in correct breathing. Both martial and performing artists develop through their systems' preliminary exercise the ability to breathe deeply in the diaphragm. Both Kalaripayattu and Kathakali performers breathe deeply through the nose, never using the mouth. Such deep breathing is necessary for both vigorous forms of physical exertion. For the Kathakali actor, shallow chest breathing through the mouth would not only lead to less stamina and lack of physical control and centring in movement, but it would also ruin

the aesthetic effect of the form. The mouth in Kathakali performance is almost always closed since the performer never speaks. Opening the mouth to breathe would destroy the created illusion of the masked face. In the midst of highly vigorous exercise, the correct breathing of the performer is necessary for him to remain prepossessed and in control of his performance energy. The binding of the Nābi area with the Kacha helps the performer achieve correct breath control as well as have the area supported for superior leaping ability.

The second function of the Kacha in Kathakali is directly related to costuming. The 25-to 30-foot length of cloth binding the actor also holds in place yards of starched cloth pieces which pad the performer's hips and give the characteristic bulbous shape to the Kathakali (fig. 23).

From training to choreography to dramatic content and even costuming, Kalarippayattu was a major factor in shaping Kathakali dance-drama. The Nair soldiers who became the first Kathakali actors carried in their bodies, dress, mythology, and physical techniques many of the most important elements which came to constitute Kathakali dance-drama.

Summary: This examination of representative cultural performances of Kerala has illustrated the legacy of Kalarippayattu within medieval Kerala culture. The heroic warrior displayed prowess, heroism, courage, and other traits of the display ethos in each of these forms. The contents, style, and aesthetics of each of these individual forms was shaped in important ways by Kalarippayattu techniques and from the regional and/or religious stories which embodied the important characteristics of the martial hero. From the actual combats of inter-state warfare to the virtual combats of the stage, martial techniques served as the vehicle for conveying the Kerala heroic-warrior display ethos.

It is not at all surprising that in such a wide range of performative styles and genres we find represented a cross-section of all major religions and caste groups in Kerala. In each case, the degree of interface between martial and performing art varied from a total and systemic influence as was the case in Kathakali to a selective use of specific techniques as was the case in Teyyam. In Teyyam the influence of the martial art was restricted to the specific techniques associated with the particular historical and heroic figure being propitiated. Such Kalari techniques used in Teyyam are Teyyam-specific, i.e. sword and shield for Kativanoor Viram Teyyam and Urumis for Tacholi Othenan.

At the opposite extreme is the systemic interface between Kalaripayattu and Kathakali. In Kathakali virtually every aspect of performance from the most fundamental body positions and beginning exercises, to body shape, use, and centring, as well as costuming, choreography, and stage combat have all been based upon the martial art. The other performance genres examined here represent a wide variation in degree of interface between these two extremes.

Whether the influence has been through specific techniques or systemic in nature, the degree of accomplishment and expertise of performance varies widely from genre to genre. Teyyam, although influenced only by specific Kalar techniques, is characterized by an extremely high degree of expertise and accomplishment. These ritual specialists become well-known for their expertise in 'playing' a particular deity or type of deity. When the Tacholi performer simultaneously wields two razor-sharp Urumis, the audience is as taken with this 'dangerous' wielding of two flexible swords as they would be if a Kalar master were performing. Indeed, the high degree of expertise of the Teyyam specialists please the god as well as the audience being blessed through witnessing the performance.

Kathakali is also characterized by a high degree of expertise in performance. Emphasis is given to the meticulously precise training of the young student from the first days of his preliminary exercises and massage so that his body will be capable of attaining the aesthetic shape desired and so that he will be capable of executing the vigorous and masculine steps, jumps, and leaps.

In contrast to Teyyam and Kathakali, other forms influenced by Kalar techniques demand much less expertise and accomplishment from their performers. For example, Oachirakali is a mass folk performance in which emphasis is placed upon the mass spectacle rather than on individual expertise. The range of abilities varies widely from troupe to troupe, with some displaying good techniques while others are careless in execution. Troupes are taught on a short term basis only what is necessary for the yearly enactment. A high degree of skill is unnecessary for the performance to achieve its desired effect.

Whether folk, classical, or ritual in form and content, all of these cultural performances influenced by Kalaripayattu collectively express the integral role which the martially trained heroic warrior played within the larger Kerala culture during the medieval period of Kerala history. The rough, folk Cavittu Natakam literally brings the Kalaripayattu-trained Christian warrior to the stage for realistic mass combat while enacting the stories of the great Christian

warrior/heroes. The highly refined aesthetic of the classically influenced Kathakali distances the audience from the immediacy of battle by transforming the martial techniques and choreography into a style far removed from the sources of its influence. Kathakali's distancing of style of battle from the 'real' world of the martial duel is in keeping with its use of the epic sources—sources which draw upon the regional wealth of martial exploits—but transports them and Kathakali readers/audiences into a refined world of the classical aesthetic. Whatever the genre and aesthetic, each form expressed for its particular caste/community a living remembrance of the glory of its heroes, and of the display ethos which such heroes embodied. □

NOTES

31. From a personal interview at Mochad, 1976.
32. M.D. Raghavan, *Folk Plays and Dances of Kerala* (Trichur: Mangaladyam Press, 1947), A.22.
33. From a personal interview at Killimangalam, 1976.
34. Due to the tremendous expense involved in importing large numbers of performers from Alleppey district as well as housing and paying the entire group for the ten-day festival, the Velakali dances and the symbolic battle has ceased to be a part of the celebrations. Today only the wooden effigies of the Pandavas remain on display outside the main temple entrance.
35. op. cit. oo. 46-47.
36. Sabeena Rephy, 'Cavittu Natakam: Dramatic Opera of Kerala'. *Sangeet Natak*, 12 (April—June 1969) pp. 56-73, p. 70.
37. M.G.S. Narayanan, *Aspects of Aryanisation in Kerala* (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1973, p.23).
38. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala, Vol. III* (Ernakulam Government Press, 1933, pp. 42-43).
39. *ibid.*, p. 123.
40. Sanghakkali Trichur Mangaladyam Press (M.E. 1113) *passim*.
- 41-42. *ibid.* (Translations by Kunju Namboodiripad with the assistance of Gurukkal Govindankutty Nair).
43. William Logan, *Manual of the District of Malabar* (Madras, Government Press, 1906, p. 102).

(This is the second part of a two-part article.)